

# Study Resolution – Ending Childhood Hunger in Montana

## THE GROWING PROBLEM OF HUNGRY CHILDREN IN THE STATE

### Emergency Food Provided to Children – Montana Food Bank Network<sup>1</sup>



- A. Households with children:  
Number of visits to Montana food banks for emergency food (2007–2010):  
2007: 175,291 visits  
2008: 236,359 visits  
2009: 218,359 visits  
2010: 242,838 visits
- B. Number of children receiving emergency food (January–June 2009 vs. 2010)  
2009: 96,606 children  
2010: 143,601 children (48% increase)

#### Backpack Programs

Montana's Backpack Program provides healthy food to children in need through private and public partnerships. The program provides healthy food to children in need through the weekend. The program is not available in all areas and is very poor. The program is not available in all areas and is very poor. The program is not available in all areas and is very poor.

### Free and Reduced Price School Meals<sup>2</sup>

- A. Public Schools: 41% of children were eligible for Free and Reduced Price (FRP) meals in 2010. This represents 57,320 children out of a total of 140,144.
- B. Private and Home Schools: Between 14% and 78% of children would be eligible for FRP meals depending on location.



#### Child Poverty in Montana

The US Census Bureau's Community Survey released in 2010 shows that 27% of children living below the poverty line in Montana are in the state's poorest counties. The 2009 Montana's Children's Living Conditions Report shows that 27% of children living below the poverty line in Montana are in the state's poorest counties.

<sup>1</sup> <http://mfbn.org>

<sup>2</sup> [http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolsPrograms/School Nutrition/](http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolsPrograms/School%20Nutrition/)

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.census.gov/>

CHILD POVERTY IN MONTANA COUNTIES Under age 18 in poverty, 2008*				FREE & REDUCED PRICE MEALS IN MONTANA SCHOOLS BY COUNTY**		
State and County	Number of children at 100% poverty	Percent of children at 100% poverty	Number of children at 200% poverty	Percent Free/Red. Eligible Students	Free/Red. Eligible Students	Total Students Enrolled
<b>MONTANA</b>	<b>41,477</b>	<b>19.2</b>	<b>96,820</b>	<b>41.0</b>	<b>57,320</b>	<b>140,144</b>
Beaverhead County	394	22.3	950	35.0	392	1,120
Big Horn County	1,329	32.3	2,677	79.6	1,718	2,159
Blaine County	609	33.2	1,233	65.5	757	1,156
Broadwater County	151	16.9	433	38.3	271	707
Carbon County	290	15.6	837	31.1	430	1,385
Carter County	35	18.2	120	48.3	55	114
Cascade County	3,914	19.6	8,864	39.6	4,611	11,687
Chouteau County	229	21.1	672	50.3	310	616
Custer County	527	21.6	1,207	35.4	616	1,738
Daniels County	48	17.8	161	32.1	77	240
Dawson County	262	15.6	749	30.0	359	1,198
Deer Lodge County	370	23.3	848	52.7	580	1,101
Fallon County	73	13.4	215	24.2	108	446
Fergus County	421	20.3	1,117	38.5	622	1,615
Flathead County	3,712	18.1	8,598	39.6	5,225	13,199
Gallatin County	2,099	10.8	5,697	25.9	2,788	10,763
Garfield County	78	29.3	161	38.0	54	142
Glacier County	1,372	33.8	2,875	72.8	1,920	2,639
Golden Valley County	58	33.7	164	56.5	83	147
Granite County	123	24.5	271	46.6	171	367
Hill County	1,050	24.5	2,359	59.6	1,812	3,040
Jefferson County	277	12.2	852	27.8	437	1,575
Judith Basin County	103	27.2	242	43.1	127	295
Lake County	2,139	31.1	4,141	58.7	2,458	4,190
Lewis and Clark County	1,844	13.6	5,014	29.2	2,772	9,484
Liberty County	68	25.0	159	43.1	94	218
Lincoln County	1,174	32.0	2,265	55.7	1,445	2,593
McCone County	59	18.4	187	37.3	342	916
Madison County	246	18.6	670	39.3	101	257
Meagher County	122	30.4	230	54.9	128	233
Mineral County	207	27.6	485	58.9	369	627
Missoula County	3,892	17.5	8,614	39.5	5,176	13,278
Musselshell County	260	31.3	511	54.0	367	680
Park County	539	16.5	1,345	34.6	687	1,987
Petroleum County	20	22.7	63	68.6	70	102
Phillips County	179	23.7	420	56.9	416	731
Pondera County	341	24.7	749	50.1	433	864
Powder River County	56	18.5	159	36.8	109	296
Powell County	235	21.4	576	38.4	288	750
Prairie County	32	19.8	82	55.8	77	138
Ravalli County	1,873	21.4	4,386	42.7	2,460	5,756
Richland County	291	14.6	824	28.2	447	1,587
Roosevelt County	1,262	40.1	2,261	74.4	1,674	2,251
Rosebud County	834	31.5	1,497	67.0	1,044	1,827
Sanders County	619	29.7	1,245	75.7	1,093	1,443
Sheridan County	74	15.4	257	40.9	201	491
Silver Bow County	1,436	20.4	3,330	43.8	1,957	4,464
Stillwater County	241	12.7	635	20.8	288	1,387
Sweet Grass County	117	14.7	321	26.5	139	524
Teton County	227	17.3	673	38.3	440	1,148
Toole County	159	16.5	443	38.5	279	725
Treasure County	24	21.2	76	45.2	47	104
Valley County	314	21.6	723	48.7	606	1,245
Wheatland County	129	34.3	285	57.6	190	330
Wibaux County	31	20.8	98	42.9	60	140
Yellowstone County	4,910	14.5	12,794	34.84	7,540	21,929

**POVERTY LEVELS FOR  
A FAMILY OF FOUR:**

100% of poverty: \$22,050/year  
200% of poverty: \$44,100/year

\*Compiled by Census Information Center  
MT Dept. of Commerce

\*\*School Nutrition Services  
MT Office of Public Instruction

## **STUDY RESOLUTION – ENDING CHILDHOOD HUNGER IN MONTANA**

### **January 2011**

- ❖ There are over 92,000 children in Montana who are at risk of experiencing hunger and lack of nutritious food. (USDA Household Food Security Measures 2009).
- ❖ Demand for emergency food at the Montana Food Bank Network has risen from 96,606 visits by children in a six month period in 2009 to 143,601 visits in the same six month period in 2010 – an increase of 48%.
- ❖ Poverty in Montana has increased from 14.8% in 2008 to 15.1% in 2009 (US Census Bureau, ACS report 2010).
- ❖ A family of two parents and two children with an income of \$22,050/year or \$1,838/month is at 100% of the Federal poverty level.
- ❖ Out of a total of 219,828 children under age 18 in Montana, more than one five (21.4%) live at 100% of poverty.
- ❖ Of these children, more than one in 10 (10.5%), live at 50% of poverty.
- ❖ There is evidence based research to show that chronic lack of healthy food increases the risk of numerous problems including obesity, diabetes, other health problems, negatively impacts academic achievement, ability to finish high school, and increases social and behavioral problems in the school years.
- ❖ Children with poor health or reduced academic potential have fewer opportunities to go on to higher education, learn critical employment skills, and are more likely to become dependant on public assistance in their adult lives.

**The Study Resolution will seek to understand and explore opportunities to eliminate child hunger in multiple ways:**

1. Review existing state, federal, local and private programs that provide healthy food to children in various settings – schools, child care centers, after school program and out-of-school times to identify gaps in services, identify barriers to accessing programs, and to seek ways to increase participation in programs for eligible children.
2. Seek ways for state programs to expand collaboration with local communities, community groups and faith-based groups to work together to promote access to programs, initiate new programs, expand successful programs and create a clearinghouse for program information.
3. Seek ways to collaborate with community groups to provide nutrition education, growing one's own food, basic food preparation skills, and food budgeting.
4. Promote and expand use of Montana farm products in schools and other facilities with children's programs.
5. Identify policy changes needed at the state and federal levels to increase efficiencies, strategic use of public funds, and opportunities for public and private investments in improving nutrition and the future of our children.
6. Develop measures of progress that these efforts can bring to ending childhood hunger in Montana.

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# School Nutrition Fact Sheet: School Breakfast Program

## Kids Missing in the Morning!

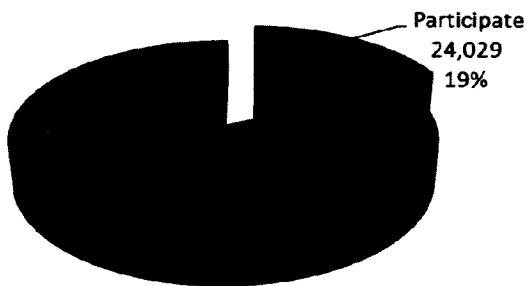
Every morning, kids are missing from schools across Montana. Some are absent, some are tardy, some are just “not there” – distracted by the rumbling in their stomachs as first period drags on and lunch feels like an eternity away. Some have to leave class to visit the nurse because their tummies hurt, and some get sent to the principal because they acted out, made irritable by their hunger.

## A Simple Solution

School breakfasts give kids the nourishment they need to learn. Eating breakfast has been shown to improve test scores and student behavior.

## Program Availability and Participation

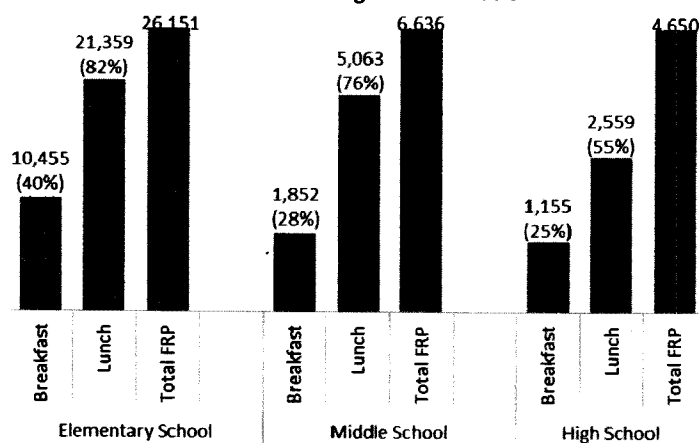
- 159 schools (20%) do not offer breakfast.
- 10% of high-need schools do not offer breakfast.<sup>1</sup>
- 19% of Montana students eat breakfast at school.



## Serving Montana's Most Vulnerable Kids

In Montana's high-need schools, only 36% of students qualifying for free or reduced-price (FRP) meals participate in School Breakfast.<sup>2</sup> Middle and high schools suffer from the lowest participation rates (less than 30%).

Meal Participation among Free and Reduced Price (FRP) Students at High-Need Schools



## NUTRITIONAL BENEFITS OF SCHOOL BREAKFAST

- Reimbursable meals meet federal nutrition standards.
- Breakfasts served as part of the School Breakfast Program provide one fourth or more of the daily nutrients children need.
- No more than 30 percent of calories in schools breakfasts can come from fat; less than 10 percent can come from saturated fat.
- Research shows that children who have school breakfast eat more fruits, drink more milk, and consume a wider variety of foods than those who don't eat breakfast or have breakfast at home.

## EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS

- Studies conclude that students who eat school breakfast increase their math and reading scores and improve their speed and memory in cognitive tests.
- Research shows that children who eat breakfast at school – closer to class and test-taking time – perform better on standardized tests than those who skip breakfast or eat breakfast at home.
- **“This is not a food service program, it is academic support.”** —Valerie Addis, Food Services Director, Missoula County Public Schools

## BEHAVIORAL BENEFITS

- Students who participate in school breakfast have lower rates of absence and tardiness and exhibit decreased behavioral and psychological problems.
- **“One of the biggest changes I saw was with student behavior – issues with paying attention, staying on-task and focused. I have done a lot of interventions with my students, but the thing that made the most significant difference was the School Breakfast Program.”** —Genelle Hocevar, teacher at Chief Joseph Elementary, Great Falls

## ECONOMIC BENEFITS

- In these tough economic times with 19% of children living in poverty, school breakfast is more crucial than ever to struggling Montana families.
- If 75% of the free/reduced price students in high-need schools ate school breakfast, Montana schools would receive an additional \$3.3 million in federal funding.

<sup>1</sup> Schools with over 40% of students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals are considered high-need.

<sup>2</sup> To receive free breakfast, household income must be at or below 130 percent of the federal poverty level; for reduced price, income must be between 130 and 185 percent of the poverty level. For the 2010-2011 school year, 130 percent of the poverty level is \$23,803 per year for a family of three; 185 percent for a family of three is \$33,874 per year.



## Why are Kids not eating School Breakfast?

Barriers to breakfast participation include not getting to school in time to eat before the bell and the stigma of sitting in the cafeteria eating while all the other kids are socializing outside.

## Alternative Breakfast Options

The following programs have proven highly effective in dramatically increasing breakfast participation.

- **Universal Breakfast** – Breakfast is offered free to all students. Ideal for schools with 75% or higher FRP participation. Universal breakfast is currently offered at 127 sites, including schools, residential child care institutions, and attendance centers.

*When Bryant School in Helena started offering Universal Breakfast, participation increased by 10%.*

- **Breakfast in the Classroom** – Food is delivered to each classroom and is often combined with attendance-taking and announcements.

*At Hawthorne School in Missoula, participation increased from less than 30% to nearly 95% once Breakfast in the Classroom was implemented.*

- **Grab N Go** – Breakfast is packaged so students can quickly grab it from the cafeteria or carts elsewhere in the school. They eat it in the cafeteria, the classroom or on the school grounds.

*At Victor School, offering the Grab N Go option increased breakfast participation from 16% to 93%.*



## Policy Recommendations to Increase School Breakfast Participation

- In districts with high-need schools and low breakfast participation, legislators can partner with the school administration and/or PTA to explore expanded breakfast options.
- Recommend that schools with 40 percent or more free or reduced-price (FRP) students to offer a school breakfast program.
- Fund free universal school breakfast to kindergarten students in districts with 40 percent or more of kindergarten students eligible for FRP school meals.
- Eliminate the co-payment for breakfasts served to K-12 students eligible for reduced-price meals and providing increased reimbursement to schools for every reduced-price breakfast served.
- Create financial incentives for schools to increase breakfast participation, start a new breakfast program, or maintain a 75 percent participation rate.
- Encourage schools to offer nutrition education on the importance of breakfast to physical and mental performance.

## For more information on expanding breakfast options...

**OPI School Nutrition Programs:** [http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School\\_Nutrition/](http://opi.mt.gov/Programs/SchoolPrograms/School_Nutrition/)

**USDA Food and Nutrition Service:** <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/expansion/>

**Food Research and Action Center:**

<http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/school-breakfast-and-lunch/school-breakfast-program/>

***Imagine a Montana where every child eats a healthy breakfast.***